Truth to Power

Truth to Power:
Public Intellectuals In and Out of Academe

Edited by

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Dedicated to the memory of Howard Zinn.
The train is still moving and so are we…

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PREFACE

HOWARD ZINN: A PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL WHO MATTERED

HENRY A. GIROUX

In 1977 I took my first job in higher education at Boston University. One reason I went there was because Howard Zinn was teaching there at the time. As a high school teacher, Howard's book, "Vietnam: the Logic of Withdrawal," published in 1968, had a profound effect on me. Not only was it infused with a passion and sense of commitment that I admired as a high school teacher and tried to internalize as part of my own pedagogy, but it captured something about the passion, sense of commitment and respect for solidarity that came out of Howard's working-class background. It offered me a language, history and politics that allowed me to engage critically and articulate my opposition to the war that was raging at the time.

I grew up in Providence, Rhode Island, and rarely met or read any working-class intellectuals. After reading James Baldwin, hearing William Kunstler and Stanley Aronowitz give talks, I caught a glimpse of what it meant to occupy such a fragile, contradictory and often scorned location. But reading Howard gave me the theoretical tools to understand more clearly how the mix of biography, cultural capital and class location could be finely honed into a viable and laudable politics.

Later, as I got to know Howard personally, I was able to fill in the details about his working-class background and his intellectual development. We had grown up in similar neighborhoods, shared a similar cultural capital and we both probably learned more from the streets than we had ever learned in formal schooling. There was something about Howard's fearlessness, his courage, his willingness to risk not just his academic position, but also his life, that marked him as special, untainted by the often corrupting privileges of class entitlement.

Before I arrived in Boston to begin teaching at Boston University, Howard was a mythic figure for me and I was anxious to meet him in real

life. How I first encountered him was perfectly suited to the myth. While walking to my first class, as I was nearing the university, filled with the trepidation of teaching a classroom of students, I caught my first glimpse of Howard. He was standing on a box with a bullhorn in front of the Martin Luther King memorial giving a talk calling for opposition to Silber's attempt to undermine any democratic or progressive function of the university. The image so perfectly matched my own understanding of Howard that I remember thinking to myself, this has to be the perfect introduction to such a heroic figure.

Soon afterwards, I wrote him a note and rather sheepishly asked if we could meet. He got back to me in a day; we went out to lunch soon afterwards, and a friendship developed that lasted over thirty years. While teaching at Boston University, I often accompanied Howard when he went to high schools to talk about his published work or his plays. I sat in on many of his lectures and even taught one of his graduate courses. He loved talking to students and they were equally attracted to him. His pedagogy was dynamic, directive, focused, laced with humor and always open to dialog and interpretation. He was a magnificent teacher, who shredded all notions of the classroom as a place that was as uninteresting as it was often irrelevant to larger social concerns. He urged his students not just to learn from history, but to use it as a resource to sharpen their intellectual prowess and hone their civic responsibilities.

Howard refused to separate what he taught in the university classroom, or any forum for that matter, from the most important problems and issues facing the larger society. But he never demanded that students follow his own actions; he simply provided a model of what a combination of knowledge, teaching and social commitment meant. Central to Howard’s pedagogy was the belief that teaching students how to critically understand a text or any other form of knowledge was not enough. They also had to engage such knowledge as part of a broader engagement with matters of civic agency and social responsibility. How they did that was up to them, but, most importantly, they had to link what they learned to a self-reflective understanding of their own responsibility as engaged individuals and social actors.

He offered students a range of options. He wasn’t interested in molding students in the manner of Pygmalion, but in giving them the widest possible set of choices and knowledge necessary for them to view what they learned as an act of freedom and empowerment. There is a certain poetry in his pedagogical style and scholarship and it is captured in his belief that one can take a position without standing still. He captured this

sentiment well in a comment he made in his autobiography, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*. He wrote:

> From the start, my teaching was infused with my own history. I would try to be fair to other points of view, but I wanted more than "objectivity;" I wanted students to leave my classes not just better informed, but more prepared to relinquish the safety of silence, more prepared to speak up, to act against injustice wherever they saw it. This, of course, was a recipe for trouble (183).

In fact, Howard was under constant attack by John Silber, then president of Boston University, because of his scholarship and teaching. One expression of that attack took the form of freezing Howard's salary for years.

Howard loved watching independent and Hollywood films and he and I and Roz [Howard's wife] saw many films together while I was in Boston. I remember how we quarreled over *Last Tango in Paris*. I loved the film, but he disagreed. But Howard disagreed in a way that was persuasive and instructive. He listened, stood his ground, and, if he was wrong, often said something like, "O.K., you got a point," always accompanied by that broad and wonderful smile.

What was so moving and unmistakable about Howard was his humility, his willingness to listen, his refusal of all orthodoxies and his sense of respect for others. I remember once when he was leading a faculty strike at Boston University in the late 1970s and I mentioned to him that too few people had shown up. He looked at me and made it very clear that what should be acknowledged is that some people did show up and that was a beginning. He rightly put me in my place that day—a lesson I never forgot.

Howard was no soppy optimist, but someone who believed that human beings, in the face of injustice and with the necessary knowledge, were willing to resist, organize and collectively struggle. Howard led the committee organized to fight my firing by Silber. We lost that battle, but Howard was a source of deep comfort and friendship for me during a time when I had given up hope. I later learned that Silber, the notorious right-wing enemy of Howard and anyone else on the left, had included me on a top-ten list of blacklisted academics at Boston University. Hearing that I shared that list with Howard was a proud moment for me. But Howard occupied a special place in Silber's list of enemies, and he once falsely accused Howard of arson, a charge he was later forced to retract once the charge was leaked to the press.

Howard was one of the few intellectuals I have met who took education seriously. He embraced it as both necessary for creating an informed citizenry and because he rightly felt it was crucial to the very nature of politics and human dignity. He was a deeply committed scholar and intellectual for whom the line between politics and life, teaching and civic commitment collapsed into each other.

Howard never allowed himself to be seduced either by threats, the seductions of fame or the need to tone down his position for the standard bearers of the new illiteracy that now populates the mainstream media. As an intellectual for the public, he was a model of dignity, engagement and civic commitment. He believed that addressing human suffering and social issues mattered, and he never flinched from that belief. His commitment to justice and the voices of those expunged from the official narratives of power are evident in such works as his monumental and best-known book, *A People's History of the United States*, but it was also evident in many of his other works, talks, interviews and the wide scope of public interventions that marked his long and productive life. Howard provided a model of what it meant to be an engaged scholar, who was deeply committed to sustaining public values and a civic life in ways that linked theory, history and politics to the everyday needs and language that informed everyday life. He never hid behind a firewall of jargon, refused to substitute irony for civic courage and disdained the assumption that working-class and oppressed people were incapable of governing themselves.

Unlike so many public relations intellectuals today, I never heard him interview himself while talking to others. Everything he talked about often pointed to larger social issues, and all the while, he completely rejected any vestige of political and moral purity. His lack of rigidity coupled with his warmness and humor often threw people off, especially those on the left and right who seem to pride themselves on their often zombie-like stoicism. But, then again, Howard was not a child of privilege. He had a working-class sensibility, though hardly romanticized, and sympathy for the less privileged in society along with those whose voices had been kept out of the official narratives as well as a deeply felt commitment to solidarity, justice, dialogue and hope. And it was precisely this great sense of dignity and generosity in his politics and life that often moved people who shared his company privately or publicly. A few days before his death, he sent me an email commenting on something I had written for *Truthout* about zombie politics. (It astonishes me that this will have been the last correspondence. Even at my age, the encouragement and support of this man, this towering figure in my life, meant such a great deal.) His

response captures something so enduring and moving about his spirit. He wrote:

> "Henry, we are in a situation where mild rebuke, even critiques we consider "radical" are not sufficient. (Frederick Douglass' speech on the Fourth of July in 1852, thunderously angry, comes close to what is needed). Raising the temperature of our language, our indignation, is what you are doing and what is needed. I recall that Sartre, close to death, was asked: "What do you regret?" He answered: "I wasn't radical enough" (personal letter).

I suspect that Howard would have said the same thing about himself. And maybe no one can ever be radical enough, but Howard came close to that ideal in his work, life and politics. Howard's death is especially poignant for me because I think the formative culture that produced intellectuals like him is gone. He leaves an enormous gap in the lives of many thousands of people who knew him and were touched by the reality of the embodied and deeply felt politics he offered to all of us. I will miss him, his emails, his work, his smile and his endearing presence. Of course, he would frown on such a sentiment, and with a smile would more than likely say, "do more than mourn, organize." Of course, he would be right, but maybe we can do both.

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INTRODUCTION

QUESTIONS OF RESPONSE/ABILITY: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC INTELLECTUALS IN THE INFORMATION AGE

SILVIA NAGY-ZEKMI AND KARYN HOLLIS

The notion that public intellectuals in the U.S. are in decline has again become fashionable with their portrayal as trapped between Academe and the "real" world. The questions to be addressed are: How can the voices of scholars and erudite thinkers penetrate the globalized, corporate media and how does media receive and represent the contribution of intellectuals to the academic and public spheres. We pose these questions all the while recognizing the "the nonidentity of intellectuals as a group" (Bové).

The collection of eleven articles presents new scholarship on the role of the intellectual in a society, and specifically in Academe, from many different perspectives. Indeed, intellectuals have been negotiating access to public discourse for centuries, but never have their opinions been more crucial to the public good. The inspiration for this volume comes from Edward Said's notion of intellectuals whose role—according to the critic—is to "uncover and elucidate the contest, to challenge and defeat both an imposed silence and the normalized quiet of unseen power, wherever and whenever possible." The main function of the intellectual is to "speak truth to power" (hence the title of the book) and to be "a witness to persecution and suffering . . . supplying a dissenting voice in conflicts with authority" (Said, "The Public Role…"). The fact that these voices are often drowned out in the media fray or absent altogether cries out for public deliberation. We start by examining some of the factors that influenced public discourse in the last few decades changing the *modus operandi* of intellectual discourse, but not its Saidian function.

Speed

New technological media challenge the traditional, grammacentric concept of intellectual activity (i.e. the superiority of written language as opposed to spoken language), as scholars are confronted with a broad diversity of cultural expressions that cannot simply be reduced to words (written or spoken). "Computer technology is creating a new kind of public, a cyberculture with all its utopian and apocalyptic possibilities" (Tofts 4). Current cultural theories have addressed many aspects of the electronic age: Hyper-reality (Baudrillard), the human/inhuman, the cyborg (Haraway), and others. Virilio advanced an alternative theory that views acceleration as the defining feature of the "information age" and the key to the organizational and transformational possibilities of postmodernity. Paul Virilio, who coined the term, "dromology"[1] suggests that our era—with fiber-optic and satellite networks, cruise missiles and drones—is approaching the limits of acceleration, and is pushed to the edge of the 'integral accident,' the unavoidable catastrophe that is a "diagnostic of technology" (Der Derian 20), the result of an "instrumental culture" in which only positive aspects of technology are emphasized while the negatives are censored (Adams). Whereas the "end of History" advanced by Fukuyama (and by Hegel and Marx before him) was not based on entirely convincing arguments—due to its evolutionary angle—Virilio's idea about the "end of Geography" seems much more evidenced in the global(ized) world where distance is conceived of differently in this "information age". Although the immediacy of communication gives the impression of closeness, experiences are transmitted by images, rather than sensory means. The objective element of speed and efficiency in the exchange and transition of information results from the new technologies; however, the subjective element of time and space generates the experience of a dramatically decreased time and space presupposing changes in the parameters of human perception due to the increased speed of electronic media, internet, etc. that provide the "twin phenomena of immediacy and of instantaneity" (Virilio, "Speed…"). Virilio also sees the "invasion of technology" into our bodies through miniaturization: Miniaturization is a dwarfing effect that concerns both the medium and its object. Thus, the new transportation technologies—supersonic planes, high-speed trains—reduce and miniaturize the distances of the territorial body, in other words, the environment. (55).

[1] From *dromos* (from the Greek word, to race) meaning, the logic of speed.

An example which illustrates both the "miniaturization" of the world and the instantaneous exchange of information is television, more specifically, news reporting. Because the screen transmits a representation, just like any form of discourse that separates us from real-time events, reactions are provoked not by the events themselves, but by conveyed images. Because speed destroys the diachronic logic (of Modernity) and transmits information in a manner contrary to sensorial expectations, experiences of this kind of hyper-reality seem real and unreal at the same time. The televised emissions of the falling buildings of the World Trade Center were transmitted as silent imagery while the sound of the destruction was heard only after the buildings had already collapsed. The public's perception of the World trade Center disaster manifests the characteristics of "time and space compression" and thus provides a prime example for the "integral accident" that signals the true end of Modernity for Virilio, as opposed to Gianni Vattimo's philosophy of "*pensiero debole*" (weak thought) as the advent of the Postmodern era.[2]

All "integral accidents", such as 9/11, the economic meltdown of 2008—whose full consequences are not yet assessed—and Hurricane Katrina have been followed by swift political and economic actions, such as the privatization of the New Orleans public schools,[3] bringing to mind Naomi Klein's *Shock Doctrine*. Immediate action is key in these cases to create the impression that authorities have responded decisively to the situation, something has been done, and actions have been taken, in ways even more important than the event that prompted them in the first place. This is why actions that, in fact, do not respond to the initial problem but serve certain interests may be enacted without any public resistance, not even by those whose interests are at stake. Post-disaster, a reorganization of cultural memory takes place whereby public discourse is hijacked by

[2] "Weak thought" for Vattimo is based on the assumption that "thinking" is not able to know the "being." Consequently societal values are produced in specific historical circumstances and may not be universalized either in space (geography) or in time. In terms of Post/Modernity, "weak thought" has a positive connotation for the present by distancing itself from the rational foundations of modernism rooted in the Enlightenment." (Zabala passim). This idea provides the foundation for the parallel existence of Modernity and Postmodernity.

[3] Milton Friedman observed: "Most of New Orleans schools are in ruins, as are the homes of the children who attended them. The children are now scattered all over the country. This is a tragedy. It is also an opportunity to radically reform the educational system." "The Promise…" Thus, a great portion of the money destined for rebuilding went to provide families with vouchers to send their children to private institutions subsidized by the state. This became a "permanent reform," i.e. the privatization of the public schools. (cf. Klein 5).

groups whose interests are intimately tied to the advancement of the governmental or "official" version. One such example is the 9/11 Public Discourse Project, http://www.9-11pdp.org/about/-index.htm, a "nationwide educational campaign for the purpose of making America safer and more secure". This site, supported by a number of foundations and corporations such as The America Prepared Campaign, Inc. and The Carnegie Corporation of New York, in fact, was legitimizing racist and discriminatory practices in the name of "national security".

The control over intellectual discourse

These examples of "integral accidents" illustrate why it is crucial that intellectual discourse not be controlled by either economic or political interests and that it be allowed to flow with (relative) freedom fueled by the excitement of inquiry and the desire to find answers and explanations free of self interest, though not subjectivity. It is one of the tasks of intellectuals to disentangle the complex web of interrelations in the representation of the "hypermodern"[4] (Virilio), an economic, political and cultural realm. On one hand, changes in the transmission of discourse from the handwritten page to the blogosphere have to be taken into account. As the medium changes, so does discourse. Arguments have become shorter and more concise, which does not necessarily mean more precise. Because of the competing spaces in which public discourse is displayed and accessed, (internet journals, the blogosphere, and the like), its style has become simpler and more direct, displaying an unapologetic subjectivity. Another reason why intellectuals may not have made more impact on the public has to do with the complexity of their prose and the jargon so prevalent in traditional scholarly discourse. The narcissistic self-referentiality, the replacement of the object at hand by the authorial subject has created a gap between the authors and the public they were supposed to reach and inspire.

The changing nature of intellectual discourse is partly due to the abundance of media (beyond the traditional journalistic media), and the horizontal scope of its availability which has expanded so much that information gathering is done by individuals at an ever increasing speed (while surfing the internet, for example); the method of choice is often to skim through the material in hypertextual order, with the attention captured by the tree-like structures of links. Long articles offering an overarching synthesis within a diachronic chain of proceedings infused

[4] "Or the cultural logic of contemporary militarism" (Armitage: *Hypermodern*…)

with "objectivity" are being replaced by Wikipedia (which—despite efforts at 'neutrality', contains entries displaying evidence of a subjectivist perspective), and openly subjective blogs offering opinion pieces that are short and spattered with hyperlinks. The acceleration of access (both for consumers and authors) from the printed page to the internet, Kindle, and iPad, and from reading to viewing/listening is also a symptom of the change in the nature of the production and dissemination of knowledge, therefore, the function of public intellectuals in society and, more specifically, in Academe must also (have) change(d) as a consequence.

Among the contributors to this volume, several have written about the changing nature of discourse and what constitutes a proper response to it. According to Karlis Racevskis, it is a mistake to deny the current complexity and interconnectedness of global events in efforts to reach audiences beyond academia. Racevskis calls for the development of new symbolic systems to map the physiology of truth which will lead to a new kind of critical understanding. He believes there has been a convergence of disciplines uniting the sciences and the humanities. Today's hyperlinked discourse seems to point out the interdisciplinary connections that have lead to this convergence.

As Academe, especially in the U.S., is run not unlike the corporate world, private universities are seeking more and more profit (at the expense of their 'workers', the faculty), and public institutions are hostage to dwindling state support and the privatization efforts by their Board of Regents. States are giving less and less funding to their public universities (New York State, 19%), yet mandate explicit financial obligation of their administration. The scandal that recently erupted in the California system was caused by an attempt to seriously undermine public higher education by starving it of funding (20% new budget cuts, above the previous cuts). Furloughs adopted by many state institutions after the 2008 market crash have demoralized faculty, especially because the burden has not been shared equally by the faculty and the administration. Sophia McClennen's article in this volume continues this line of reasoning and shows how neoliberalism in the university keeps academics from approaching critical ideological terrain, material workplace issues and progressive political causes.

The intellectual in/out of Academe

Statistics show (cf. Posner) that many public intellectuals are academics, and thus experience the existential problems of academics—particularly those in the Humanities—which arise as university administrators emulate

the corporate model to run their institutions. After eight years of G.W. Bush's intolerant political climate and the continuing ideological uncertainty of the Obama administration, this economic concern is timelier than ever. In spite of the economic hardships, academics at lease have certain job security, due to the tenure system. That is, if they get tenure. One of the politically motivated[5] unsuccessful tenure cases was that of Norman Finkelstein, a political scientist who was denied tenure at DePaul University in 2008.

As we have indicated, it is also of utmost importance to examine the relationship between non-academic public intellectuals and the corporatized media. The key issue, of course, is the function of power with its ability to oppress, silence and censor. Jeffrey R. Di Leo describes the reconfiguration of academic identity to that of "corporate intellectual," which recognizes that corporate and academic values are now meshed. Instead of denying this situation,—he suggests that —we can gain from considering the mass "market value" of our ideas, not in the sense of academic dishonesty, but in focusing on rhetorical considerations of audience, and purpose, to gain a wider following. In a similar vein, John G. Nichols, recalls a time in our history when intellectuals could become amateurs and enter the mass marketplace to affect public discourse. Fortifying his idea with Said's notion of the amateur, he points to the end of the 20th century, when intellectuals wrote books keyed to the American tradition of self-help and advice texts, responding to public needs, e.g. I.A. Richards', *How to Read a Page* and others. This approach leads us to consider all those who write and have an audience on the internet as non-academic amateurs. Such amateurization democratizes knowledge production and acts against corporatization of culture presenting "a way for outsiders to become insiders and insiders to become outsiders" (128).

Richard Posner, "America's most prolific celebrity jurist and legal theorist" (Alterman), confines his notion of public intellectuals mainly to academics, arguing that not all intellectuals are academics, but "most of

[5] Finkelstein said he clearly "met the publishing standards and the teaching standards required for tenure" and that DePaul's decision was based on "transparently political grounds" and an "egregious violation" of academic freedom. This argument is supported by the president of DePaul University, Father Holtschneider's upholding the University Board on Promotion and Tenure's decision to deny tenure to Finkelstein, in spite of the fact that he considers Finkelstein "an excellent teacher and a nationally recognized public intellectual," for the sole reason that Finkelstein does not "honor the obligation" to "respect and defend the free inquiry of associates." (Cohen *New York Times*).

them are" (5). He holds the academic system of tenure (at least partly) responsible for what he perceives as the decline of public intellectuals. "Tenure contracts make the intellectual's career safe, comfortable, one which can breed aloofness and complacency" (4). This characterization of the declining intellectual is quite pervasive in the public sphere, particularly the representation of academics as intellectually feeble and disconnected from the 'real world'. However, even Posner recognizes the growing trend of academics in the public intellectual arena. According to a statistic table in his book (207), academics comprise 2/3rd of who he considers public intellectuals and the trend is growing.[6]

If we consider Edward Said's prescription of what a public intellectual must do, namely: to "speak truth to power,"— an "egoistic fantasy", according to Posner (cf. Alterman)—or more specifically, to "publicly raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (and not to produce them), to be someone who cannot be easily co-opted by governments or corporations" (Said, *Representation* 23), it should come as no surprise that conservative intellectuals, such as Posner, wish to downplay the importance of contributions by academics to public discourse. The challenge to existing hierarchies by public intellectuals through new ways of disseminating information has been increasingly influential in the political process. Prime examples are the 2008 election of Obama and the rising voices regarding the climate change crisis. What are these new ways and how are they different from previous manners of dissemination? There are three aspects that we wish identify as agents of difference:

1. The internet, particularly the blogosphere that is owned and restricted by no-one (at least so far in the U.S.).
2. The speed with which information is transmitted.
3. Ownership of media definitely determines the content; as Michael Parenti puts it: the "corporate news media faithfully reflect the dominant class ideology" (Parenti, internet source). Discourses that challenge these ideologies were not published in the so-called mainstream media in the past. They were deemed of "no interest to the public." With no owner, the internet represents a full spectrum of ideologies, and open censorship is difficult to implement in the U.S. because of the First Amendment considerations and because no one may claim that content must offer

[6] According to Posner's (somewhat arbitrary) statistics, 99 of the dead intellectuals were academics, as opposed to 79 non-academics. However, among the living, this proportion is much different: 255 academics as opposed to 113 non-academics (216).

"what readers/listeners/viewers, want to read/hear/see" which is a typical argument to implement corporate-owned media censorship.

However, a frequently raised criticism of the internet is that it fragments and polarizes communities rather than builds consensus. But as Corie Lok astutely points out: "weren't communities *already* polarized before the Internet came along?" Furthermore, according to the Pew Internet and American Life project, only one fourth of Internet users seek information on-line that supports what they already believe. This means that three quarters of users encounter (or even seek out) ideologically diverse information that may cause changes in their thinking. But the most important reason to disregard criticism about the internet as a polarizing medium comes from Said's definition of the public intellectual, who is "neither a pacifier nor a consensus builder but someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever so accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say…" (*Representation* 23). Said contextualizes this definition not in political or even social terms, but as a matter of method.

The task

Daniel L. Zins points out why it is paramount for intellectuals to intervene in public discourse, identifying six areas of dire global emergency: genocide, militarism, climate change, human rights violations, structural/economic/ecological violence, and erosion of basic liberties. Indeed, the more we venture to define the task of the public intellectual, the more we must evoke the Lévinasian concept of ethics[7] echoed in our title, namely, responsibility conceived as the ability to respond to the human Other resulting, in our case, in the connection of ethics and politics. The public intellectual generates discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, to enable the analysis of large bodies of knowledge, ever conscious of the vicious cycle of the interconnection of power and discourse. The intellectual aims "to break down the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thought and communication" (Said, *Representations* xi).That is why public media shuns intellectuals who are "disturbers of the status quo" (x). As Raymond Williams suggests, unfavorable references to "intellectuals, intellectualism and intelligentsia" are dominant and "it is clear that such uses persist" (170).

[7] Lévinas conceives ethics as the interruption of one's complacency when faced with the Other, "*le visage de l'autre*".

The centerpiece of Posner's book, *Public Intellectuals, a Study of Decline*, is a listing of 546 "top intellectuals" based on the mention of their name in the media (194-214). Posner considers the media's mention of public intellectuals as an innocent, and above all, objective measure or fame. However, the publishing industry and the media function according to corporate rules whose bottom line is profit. Therefore, inclusion in and exclusion from the public media (TV, newspapers) is not an objective matter, nor it is necessarily linked to intellectual merit. At the top of Posner's list (according to his own criteria, i.e. being mentioned in the media) are Henry Kissinger, Pat Moynihan, George Will, Larry Summers, William Bennett, and Robert Reich—all politicians, pundits and ex-cabinet members (of course, G. W. Bush is not included). They will certainly not speak truth to power, for they are part of it. However, omitted from the list are Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Tzvetan Todorov, Jean Baudrillard, Juan Cole, Néstor García Canclini, bell hooks and Stuart Hall, all academics who do speak up and shape the public mind, but are not often mentioned (or interviewed) in the "mainstream" (i.e. corporate) media precisely because of their critical thought. (We do not consider "mainstream" media such venues as LinkTV, Democracy Now, Free Speech TV, MIND TV and others because of their (relative) marginality. They are not available on cable TV although some of them appear on PBS stations and satellite providers. Therefore, it is in the interest of someone like Posner, who supports the status quo, to contribute to the myth of the declining intellectual and propagate mistrust and defamation of thinkers who profess a different ideology. To (re)turn to Said, the challenge (and perhaps the appeal) of intellectual expression is found in dissenting against the status quo on behalf of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups (xvii). Matthew Abraham's article provides an extensive review of Said's work on the intellectual. Abraham details how Said urged academics to move beyond narrow professionalism to engage with the wider culture, imperialism and resistance politics. We might ask whether Said is building his definition on Sartre's notion of the "intellectuel engagé," or responding to Lévinas's ethical mandate. Here Gramsci's division of intellectuals in two groups comes to mind for he proposed on the one hand, the "traditional intelligentsia" such as teachers, administrators, priests, and the like, whose job revolves around intellectual inquiry and who (wrongly) see themselves as an elite, a class apart from the rest. On the other are the "organic intellectuals" who articulate experiences that the masses are not able to do by and for themselves (9). This would place academics—as professionals—in the first group. But it seems that Sartre, Said and Chomsky wish to merge these two Gramscian categories so that

intellectuals would fill both roles, particularly those in Academe, who are, indeed, professionals, but at the same time are the most able to enact the Saidian directive to speak up in the face of injustice because of their protected labor status (tenure). Even so, such public defiance is increasingly difficult to carry out within Academe. If one takes a look at the 2009 issue of *Works and Days* dedicated to the topic of academic freedom, it becomes clear that academic discourse is being seriously undermined for several reasons:

1. The corporatization of universities. *Save the World on Your Own Time*, Stanley Fish's latest book[8] illustrates the significance of free speech by focusing on academic discourse. Fish argues that there is but one proper role for the academic in society: to advance bodies of knowledge and to equip students for doing the same. "When teachers offer themselves as moralists, political activists, or agents of social change rather than as credentialed experts in a particular subject and the methods used to analyze it, they abdicate their true purpose" (description of the book on the Oxford University Press website). In other words, faculty members are workers; they are paid to teach their subjects and not to disseminate "lofty [leftist?] ideals" about the world, as one commentator put it in reaction to Mark Taylor's article, "End the University as We Know It" that appeared in *The New York Times*. What is not taken into account by this argument is the fact that in the Humanities—where inquiry revolves around questions of representation and articulation of discourse—it is not possible to de-ideologize the argument to objectively present a point, because the point is precisely the subjectivity of discourse in which representation is motivated by a certain world view resulting from one's experiences, beliefs, and values. Power is an organic part of the equation, for truth, morality and meaning are created through discourse. What is wrong with Fish's argument is that power, in fact, is based on knowledge (episteme) and, in a circular fashion, it also produces knowledge that will justify and sustain it through discourse. Thus it is not possible to "advance bodies of knowledge and equip students to do the same" (Fish) without transmitting the power structures upon which the meaning of this knowledge is based. As Judith

[8] According to Jonathan Culler's piece in *The Profession*, "Writing to Provoke" Fish's motivation for giving these titles, like the one above and *There is No Such Thing as Free Speech… and It's A Good Thing Too*, is none other than to provoke intellectual discussion pioneering a different, novel kind of role for the public intellectual, in addition to the two that Culler defines: "someone who mediates between the academy and the general public" and who "operates outside of the academy and pronounces judiciously on a range of public issues" (84).

Butler notes, "the distinction"—suggested by Fish—"between the academic and the political is itself a political judgment" (89). Thus, Butler argues, Fish's point is to advocate not a politically bare classroom discourse, but perhaps to advocate one type of political judgment. This presumption is supported by Fish's own statement: "I am urging the restriction on what is done with the content when it is brought to the classroom" (Fish, "Professor…").

2. The decreasing public support for public institutions of higher education and the dwindling public[9] and institutional support for research projects in the Humanities and Social Sciences.[10]

3. Financial support by conservative groups targeting specific academic programs and areas in a desire to "take back" universities from the "grip of the left". *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that in 2007, $40 million was spent in the U.S. in such a manner. One such example is the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions founded in 2000 at Princeton University (Blumenthal 16).

E-intellectual discourse

It is crucial to return to the question of access as academic discourse is becoming indirectly, but increasingly influenced by corporate donors not only in the Sciences but also in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Nevertheless, as more people, including intellectuals, have access to the internet and rely on it for obtaining information, the easier it becomes to have the 'public ear' although it must be noted that the abundance of material posted on the internet diffuses this potential. It is not unusual for a simple search to turn up as many as 2 million hits. How large an audience can one voice reach in such a jungle of information? The speed with which users can jump from one topic to another and the quantity of hyperlinked pages that may be looked up in a short period of time enable users to gather an enormous amount of information compared to earlier methods of research (in libraries, from printed material). A concern

[9] Funding for institutions that support the Humanities, such as the National Endowment for Humanities has been steadily decreasing. In 2011 NEH will have to cut $ 7.2 million, after cuts by 18.4 million and 13.9 million respectively in 2008 and 2009 (NHA).

[10] We do not wish to address the issue of sciences, for it is a rather intricate question and does not fit within the limits of this writing. It involves such complex issues as the relationship of sciences with Academia and the corporate world, and the arbitrary divisions of sciences, humanities and social sciences, just to name a few.

frequently raised deals with the quality and reliability of the information acquired on the internet. Because of its rhizomatic structure and lack of hierarchical controls, the internet is different from libraries where sources have been previously vetted and evaluated before the public is given access.

In addition to the internet, new forms of electronic media appear regularly that provide a powerful dialogic space and change the nature of discourse. Here are a few examples:

1. Hypertext is a fairly new form of electronic writing that attempts to take advantage of the digital media and gives the reader the freedom of navigating through a large number of sources in a short time.
2. Zine, or e-zine is a type of electronic magazine published on the internet concerned with a specific subject and containing contributions in several discursive forms (poetry, essays, reviews, criticism, and narrative). Many e-zines are refereed. (Kairos, TechKnowLogia,).
3. Blogs, ranging from personal diaries to collective knowledge displays, often an eclectic array, but occasionally dedicated to specific subjects.
4. Wiki, a website for creating bodies of knowledge. Collective authorship and (relatively) open editing is the major characteristic of wikis, many of which are open source (Wikipedia).

In the last article, Anne Melfi ties together the assessment of past-century public intellectuals, such as Benjamin Franklin, whose work—despite the distance in time—provides lessons for the internet age. Online discourse, like the pamphlet in Franklin's day, has encouraged grassroots engagement and a democratic broadening of access to the public discursive arena. Melfi draws lessons from Franklin's practices and makes tentative recommendations for today's intellectuals. These practices include finding access to the public ear, advocating free and open discourse, inventing a forum, using wit and charm when possible, developing a trustworthy persona, relying on plain talk, calling on a network of friends, committing to public service and educating the populace.

The changes in the media used for the transmission and acquisition of information affect not only intellectual academic and non-academic discourse, but also the entire literary realm. Multimedia is included in some of the electronic narrative production available now on the internet. For example, a new epistolary e-genre has emerged: the email novel, such as *Intimacies* by Eric Brown that he calls a digital epistolary novel (DEN),

modeled after and based on the 18th century epistolary novel, *Pamela* by Samuel Richardson. "The problem with e-books has always been that they use traditional text and layout," Brown said in an interview with Adam Baer. With *Intimacies*, the multimedia interface had to be developed before the narrative could unfold. With such developments it is not surprising that U.S e-books sales rose in 2009 by 136.2 % compared with 2008 (E-book News), and it seems clear that e-literature and the prevalence of on-line information will continue to grow in the future. And while the large-scale social and cultural changes that are bound to occur with the spread of digital culture cannot be foreseen, we believe digital media offer countless opportunities for public intellectuals to insert their voices more forcefully into the public discursive arena.

The structure of the volume

The book is dedicated to Howard Zinn, who passed away on January 27th, 2010, for he was, indeed, a public intellectual "who mattered" as Henry Giroux put it in the preface. Zinn embodied both the intellectual and the moral qualities that are customary and necessary "traits of the trade" coupled with a (com)passion that made him memorable and unique.

Falling into three chapters the eleven articles that comprise the volume aim at offering definitions of the public intellectual, while scrutinizing the complex relationship between knowledge and power in an interdisciplinary context.

In Chapter I: Truth to Power, the possibilities of the reconceptualization of political discourse are examined. The contributions are informed by concepts from cultural and media studies that deal with representation, subjectivity and the manipulability of public discourse. This comprehensive approach enables a deeper understanding of the historical and discursive processes of the political sphere. Some of the articles included here provide references to the efforts of past U.S. administrations to silence public intellectuals and to discredit academic programs, such as area studies, namely Latin American Studies and Middle Eastern Studies, the two most targeted on ideological bases.

Chapter II: In and Out of Academe, echoes the spirit of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *Outside in the Teaching Machine* in addressing the academic context of intellectual activity. The articles demonstrate that inclusions in and exclusions from the realm of power are discursive and deliberate, and that Academe proves to be no exception to this dynamic, especially since corporate models of management have been widely adopted.

Chapter III: Models of Engagement, offers several models of intellectual engagement and political/cultural intervention. Using critical frameworks such as Réda Bensmaia's "experimental nations" and others, authors provide re-articulations of intellectual heritage within the different schemes of imperial expansion. However, contributors also defy binarisms and other essentialist approaches as they move from scrutiny of the oppressor/oppressed dynamic to a more nuanced view that includes cultural hybridity and métissage. Globalization provides the context for an analysis of the representation of national identities and imageries in which the modernist idea of a nation is deconstructed and reconceived as a site where moral responsibility of citizens is required and expressed. Among the volume's essays articulating the way influential intellectuals from various eras and nations have interpreted their public roles, Ranjan Ghosh's explores the life of Rabindranath Tagore and his model of cross-cultural dialogue at Visva Bharati. On the other hand, Susan Shin Hee Park examines a model of an "organic intellectual" (Gramsci) in Monique Truong's *The Book of Salt* and both Ghosh and Park draw conclusions about the power dynamics of linguistic imperialism. In a comparative vein, Lisa Bernstein uncovers the struggle between complacency and activism in the work of Nadine Gordimer and Christina Wolf, which seemed to have defined their lives. Following Bernstein's piece there is another attempt by Lois Wolfe to deal with three women writers who were influential intellectuals of their time, Gabriela Mistral, Victoria Ocampo and Rosario Castellanos, who succeeded beyond the norms set for women in the early twentieth century by inventing "imagined communities" to support and sustain their work. Such "experiential legitimacies" could be used by intellectuals today to maintain their engaged commitment.

By interpreting exemplary texts that expose a distinct transformation in the concept of intellectual production, the articles assess the transition from an objectivist, historical standpoint to an imaginative construct of cultural relativism. Examples of past and current attitudes vis-à-vis intellectuals are thus analyzed from a transnational perspective by focusing on the exchange of ideologies and the practices of state-power, democracy, and anti-democracy, including the recent "war(s) on terror." The wide ranging and nearly totalizing coverage achieved by the discursive representation of such issues demonstrates the undeniable fact that academic and mediatic discourses are often at odds with each other. Furthermore, the economically supported power structures find expression, albeit in diverse forms and with periodic justifications, in public discussion that aim to delineate and limit the function of the intellectual in a society.

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